

FAQ: What does our church teach about giving?

Membership Class

Cross of Grace Church

DRAFT Updated Oct 2019

1. Stewardship

The Bible is clear, that everything on the earth is the Lords. He created all things, and owns all things; The land, the animals, all of the gold and silver, any and all things in the earth (Leviticus 25:23, Psalm 50:10-12, Haggai 2:8, Psalm 24:1). God also has authority over all things (Psalm 135:6, 1 Chr. 29:11-12).

From the beginning, God created us for relationship with Him, with one of its main components being God allowing us to be stewards of His creation. He has given us responsibility over all of the things that he has created and has authority over (Genesis 1:27-28, Genesis 2:19-22). He didn't relinquish his ownership or authority, but instead placed us in the role of stewards that we might be the means by which he accomplishes His will on earth.

We see Jesus carry this same theme forward in the New Testament in his telling of the parable of the talents. We see again that our role is one of a steward of all that God has given us from that which is His. How we manage what He gives us is of utmost importance and has eternal consequences. (Matthew 25:14-21)

Since we don't own anything of our own, God has promised to be our provider (Phil 4:19). As stewards we are to seek our role in the "kingdom of God" and in return God promises to provide all of our basic provisions and needs (Matt. 6:25-33). Not only does He promise to provide for our needs, but also for everything that pertains to life in relationship with God. (1 Peter 1:3) Therefore, we don't hold tightly onto what isn't ours, but instead seek to use all that God has given us for His purposes.

2. Giving

How we handle the money God has entrusted to us reveals our understanding of whose money is it, as well as tests our faith that we trust that God will provide for all of our needs as He promised. This should free us to be willing to use God's money however He directs us.

This is a good summary of the way the New Testament views giving:

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (ESV) 2 Corinthians 9:6–7

Because our money is not our own, we are encouraged to give joyfully and an extension of our acknowledgement that we are giving that which has been given to us (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). However, we're encouraged not to give under compulsion or guilt or with reluctance, but rather joyfully.

How much should we give? God established the tithe in the Old Testament as a means to help Israel understand that their possessions were His, but that He would be faithful to provide for them. It was also a means to provide for the priests that were dedicated to attend to the temple on behalf of the rest of the tribes of Israel (Leviticus 27:30-32, Numbers 18:21-24, Genesis 28:20-22). The tithe was not optional, but instead a command from God (Malachi 3:6-10). However, in the New Testament the specific amounts mandated by the law in the Old Testament are not reissued. Rather than simply giving a specific amount, Paul encourages the church to "sow generously" into the work of the gospel. Each person and family should be seeking the Lord and asking how best to invest God's money.

What does giving accomplish practically? In the same way, Paul reminds us in the new testament that God uses the giving of the church to provide for those that have been called to serve the church as their life's work (1 Corinthians 9:13-14, Galatians 6:6). Paul encourages the church that God's desire is that we use His money generously towards the work of the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18). 2 Corinthians 9 encourages us that if we sow generously in the work of God's kingdom God actually uses it to bring about a bountiful and full harvest of kingdom work and advancement. The pattern in the New Testament is that giving went to support local churches and to establish new churches. Though we can certainly give beyond these causes, we would be wise not to neglect the clear Scriptural priorities.

What trips us up in giving? God cautions us not to begin looking at what we have as our own, as it will lead to selfishness and a lack of faithfulness as stewards. Not only does this affect our relationship with God, but it hinders his desire to trust us with more kingdom work as well as affecting our eternal rewards (Luke 16:10-13, Matthew 25:14-21).

What encourages us with giving? God actually promises that those who are obedient to be faithful stewards will be entrusted with more responsibility from God and will be abound in kingdom works because they have proven to be trustworthy (2 Corinthians 9:5-11. Proverbs 11:24-25). God promises eternal rewards for faithful stewards that demonstrate that they recognize God's Lordship and ownership over everything that have, and demonstrate a faithfulness to serve the Lord with all that He has entrusted to us (Matt 6:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:10-14; Col 3:23-25; Philipians 4:14-17)